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ABSTRACT

This booklet, developed to encourage young people to volunteer, presents a brief, informal overview of types of volunteer service for youth and information on where to find organizations in need of young volunteers. The following activities are suggested: working in hospitals; working with animal welfare organizations, zoos, or nature conservation groups; reading to the elderly or persons with disabilities; working in arts organizations; coaching youth sports; working with persons with disabilities or volunteering with Special Olympics; recycling; participating in charity races or runs; working to stop crime or start a "block watch" organization in school; helping in food pantries or in building housing for disadvantaged persons; working to stop alcohol and drug abuse by children and teenagers; helping to clean up parks or planting gardens; working with disadvantaged children; and working on personally created volunteer projects. The guide also lists "dos and don'ts" of successful volunteering, and local resources for volunteer ideas. A list of 12 national organizations with information for young volunteers is included. (KC)

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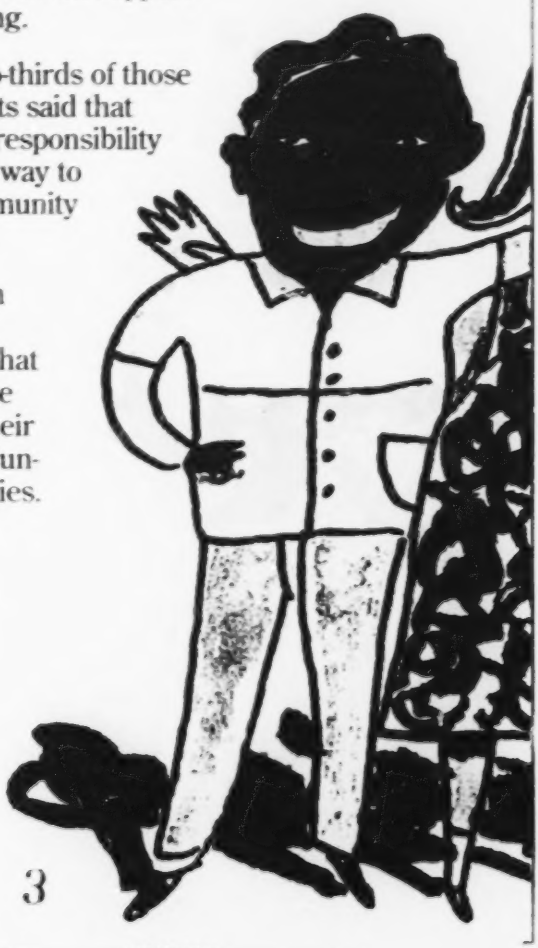
CATCH THE SPIRIT!

Ideas and information on how young people can help make their communities better places to live.

In this fast-paced world of in-line skating and on-line computers, it's surprising there's time for you to attend classes, do homework, hold down a part-time job, take part in extracurricular activities and set aside time for fun and relaxation with family and friends.

Yet despite busy schedules, many young people like you are concerned about what's going on in their neighborhoods and communities, and are looking for ways to get involved. Here are some facts:

- In a recent survey of nearly 1,000 young people commissioned by Prudential, 95 percent of those interviewed support volunteering.
- Almost two-thirds of those respondents said that individual responsibility is the best way to solve community problems.
- Sixty-seven percent indicated that they devote some of their time to volunteer activities.



Why are so many students interested in serving their communities?

Because they want to:

- make a difference
- develop new skills
- explore career paths
- have fun working with friends
- feel good about themselves

Although the efforts of one person may seem small, young people throughout America continue to discover that millions of individual volunteers can create a revolution of sorts. And as public, private and corporate funding declines, volunteering may help save vital community programs and services.

Whatever your reason for volunteering, once involved, it's easy to get hooked—to "catch the spirit" of community involvement. Volunteering can expand your horizons and become a satisfying, lifelong commitment.

What's right for me?

You may make an instant decision to volunteer in your community. But don't be hasty in selecting a project or organization. First and foremost, take time to learn about groups, ideas and causes that interest you.

Think about:

- What community or neighborhood problems concern you?
- Does volunteering for one of these groups fit your own interests?

There are many reasons to volunteer. But one should be universal—volunteer for something you can enjoy. As you search for the "right" volunteer activity, ask yourself:

- How much time do I have to commit?
- What talents or skills do I offer?
- What do I want to get out of my involvement?
- Will I enjoy this type of service?

Don't limit your thinking. You may prefer the more structured approach of a larger group or the "family" feeling of a smaller organization. Perhaps you want to create your own volunteer activity by engaging your friends or family, or maybe just work alone on a project. When you've selected or narrowed your volunteer interests, you may want to talk to your parents, friends, a teacher or club sponsor, a counselor or someone at your church or synagogue. They might have suggestions on how to go about making it happen. Call organizations and local government offices that offer services to the public. Read your local newspaper. Watch and listen to the television and radio news for ideas.

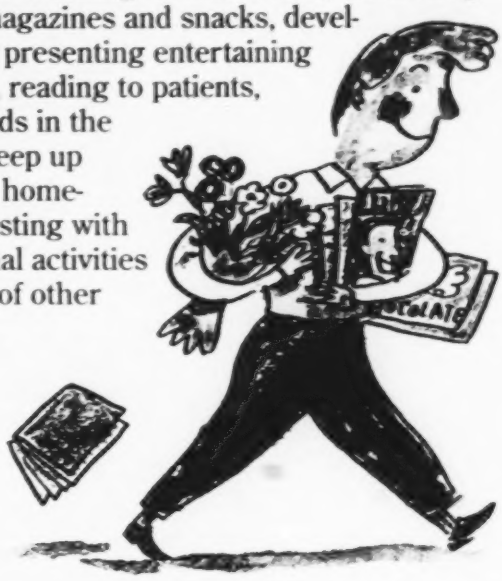
After you've made a choice, commit yourself to it. Give it your energy—and adequate time—to determine if it's a good fit.

What can a volunteer do?

This information can help serve as a compass to point you to some of the many possibilities for volunteering. Combine these suggestions with your own ideas and creativity—and go for it.

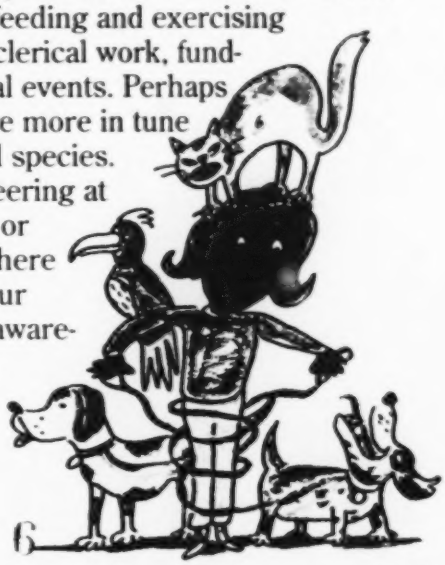
A PRESCRIPTION FOR SATISFACTION

So the medical or health care field intrigues you. Take heart, opportunities abound. Consider volunteering at a local blood bank, a medical clinic for the poor, a nursing home, an emergency medical squad, a children's or veterans' hospital, a cancer or AIDS hospice. Volunteering may mean working in the office, delivering flowers, magazines and snacks, developing and presenting entertaining programs, reading to patients, helping kids in the hospital keep up with their homework, assisting with recreational activities or scores of other activities.



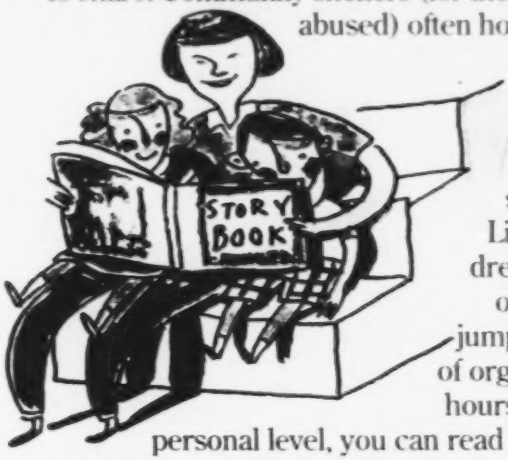
IT'S A JUNGLE OUT THERE

If animals are your passion, here's a flock of ideas. Check with your local zoo, animal shelter or humane society. Volunteer chores can include cleaning cages, feeding and exercising the "residents," clerical work, fund-raising, or special events. Perhaps your interests are more in tune with endangered species. Consider volunteering at a wildlife refuge or nature habitat where you can steer your commitment to awareness campaigns or fund-raising activities.



YOU'RE READING OUR MIND

If you enjoy reading, you've got a skill that's easy to share. Community shelters (for the homeless or abused) often house children who are as hungry for fun and stories as a square meal. Libraries, children's hospitals or wards may jump at the offer of organized story hours. On a more personal level, you can read to an elderly neighbor or someone who is blind. Or check into a local organization that needs readers for a "talking books" program. Volunteers are often needed for literacy programs serving all ages, tutoring younger students or helping immigrants learn English.

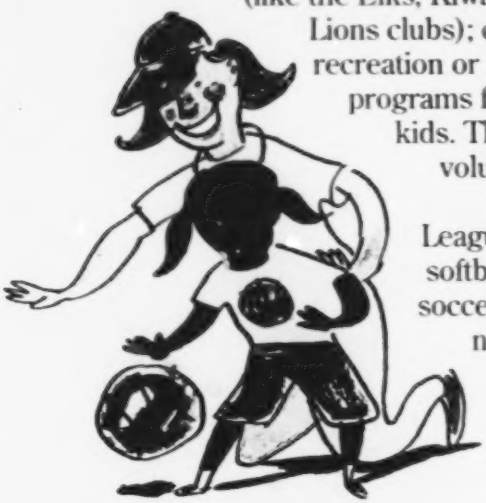


CURTAIN UP, LIGHT THE LIGHTS

Young volunteers with an interest in the arts can share those talents, as individuals or in a group. Check with senior centers, shelters or daycare programs, local parks, or recreation programs. Offer to serve as an usher at a community theater or help find stage props and costumes. Or offer assistance at an arts center or a local art gallery. Develop skits, musical revues, magic shows, prepare readings or other entertainment you can present at senior citizen homes, hospitals or other places. Not only does your contribution help keep cash-strapped arts alive in your community, but it also helps build a lifelong appreciation for the arts and bring enjoyment to many.

SOME SPORTING GOOD IDEAS!

Share your athletic talent and interest as a coach or coaching assistant in sports or recreational activities. "Help wanted" signs are often posted at volunteer organizations serving people with mental or physical challenges; YMCA, YWCA or Red Cross chapters; local civic organizations (like the Elks, Kiwanis, Rotary or Lions clubs); city parks; and recreation or neighborhood programs for low-income kids. They often seek volunteers to help out with Little League, swimming, softball, basketball, soccer, tennis, gymnastics or other recreational groups.

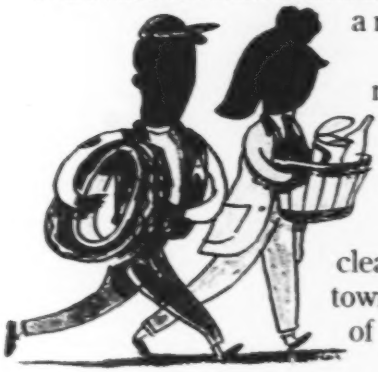


APPLY YOUR ABILITIES TO DISABILITIES

Be a special friend to people with mental or physical disabilities. Not only will your skills contribute to the programs, but you may help change public perception about people who have special challenges. Volunteer for local, regional or state Special Olympics competitions held in many communities. Local groups and residential facilities often need volunteer help with field trips to museums and amusement parks, recreation and sports activities, or arts and crafts programs. Contact community centers or other facilities for the disabled, or ask the mayor's office for options.

RECYCLING CYCLE

Concern about our environment is serious stuff. And your commitment can start right at home. If you're not doing it now, start recycling your own newspapers, glass and aluminum at home. And then get your neighbors involved. If your school doesn't have a recycling program, talk with your teachers or principal about getting one started. Companies supplying your school cafeteria might lend a hand in this effort. Or consider adopting your block, a local park or common area. Recruit some friends and pick up litter on a regular basis. Recycle what you can. Any money from recycling can be pumped back into your effort or given to a favorite charity. Having a cleaner neighborhood or town is an important part of protecting our planet.



HEART AND SOLE

Perhaps you don't want to take on the responsibility of organizing and planning. There are other ways to help your favorite causes. There are many activities in which you can let your feet do the talking—at dance marathons and other indoor activities or at outdoor events such as bicycle races, walkathons and charity runs.

BE A CRIME FIGHTER

If you have an interest in police work as a career or are concerned about crime in your community, here are some ideas.

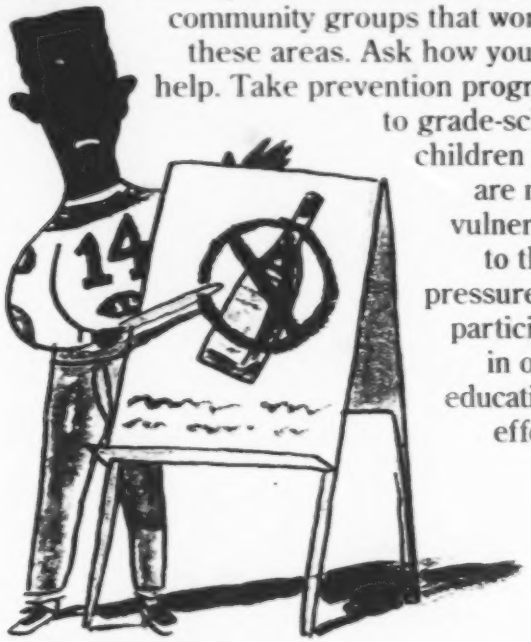
You've probably heard of neighborhood watch programs in residential areas. How about developing a school watch program? Talk with your principal or school counselor about establishing a student patrol that keeps an eye out for and reports theft, graffiti and other crimes in your school. Contact your local police department to see if you can help develop or get involved in a student watch program, or participate in a program to eliminate graffiti in your community or on public transportation.

MANY IN NEED, INDEED

Perhaps you've been concerned about homeless or needy people. Their needs are many—from shelter to food and clothing. Community projects and church-affiliated organizations such as Habitat for Humanity need volunteers to construct housing for the poor. Contact community or church-sponsored soup kitchens and volunteer to help prepare or distribute food. Suggest that a school play or concert charge admission of canned foods that can be donated to a food pantry or soup kitchen. Initiate a campaign to recycle food and drink containers and donate the money to a local food bank.

LEND AN EAR AND A SHOULDER

Perhaps you're concerned about drug or alcohol abuse. Talk to your counselor, minister or community groups that work in these areas. Ask how you can help. Take prevention programs to grade-school children who are most vulnerable to these pressures or participate in other educational efforts.



IT'S A DIRTY JOB!

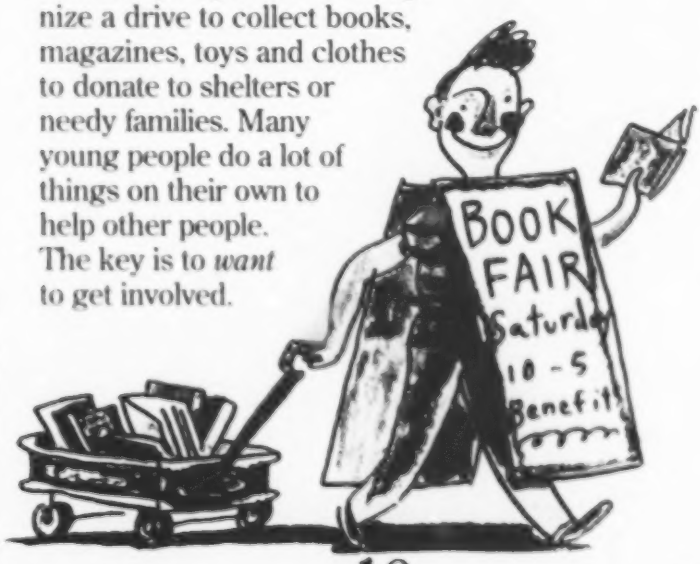
Here are some earthy ideas to sink your hands into. Your local parks department may welcome an offer to plant trees and flowers in public parks, along walkways or in downtown areas. Talk to your principal about beautifying your school grounds. Local environmental groups, landscaping companies, or the National Arbor Day Foundation (located in Nebraska City, Nebraska) often give away tree seedlings. Planting flowers for an elderly neighbor can bring a lot of happiness to them—and you! A local low-income housing project may need some help in a community garden. Or plant and tend your own garden, selling the fruits—more likely vegetables—of your labor to earn money for your favorite charity or a food bank.

KIDS ARE YOUR THING!

If you like helping other kids, or are considering a teaching career, volunteering can work for you. Local camps, especially those for low-income youngsters or kids who are ill, need counselors and tutors. Children's hospitals, low-income daycare centers and shelters, programs for "latchkey" kids, homework tutoring phone lines, or Big Brother or Sister programs are only a few ideas. If you like working with your hands, help clear and build a neighborhood playground for other kids. Some local city or county courtrooms are interested in activities for children who must come to court with a parent; ask about setting up a room with books and toys, and volunteer to help care for these children.

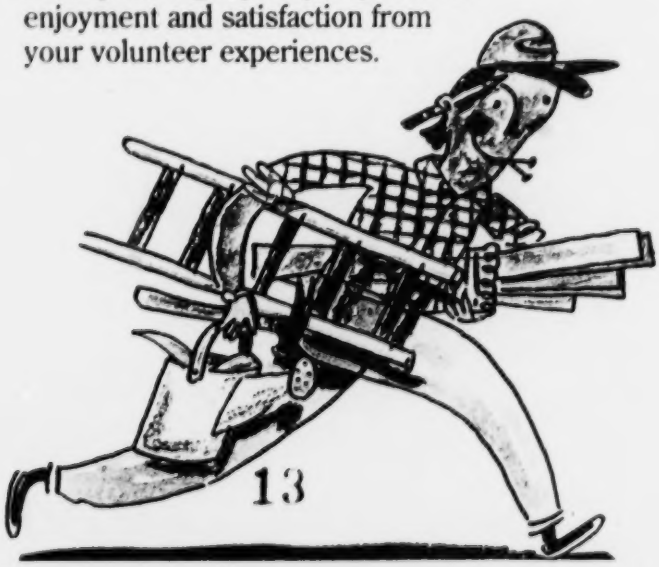
YOUR OWN SPECIAL BRAND OF HELP

If you want to do something in your own special way, put on your creative thinking cap. On your own, or with a few friends, you can raise money for your favorite cause through bake sales, car washes, garage sales. Or organize a drive to collect books, magazines, toys and clothes to donate to shelters or needy families. Many young people do a lot of things on their own to help other people. The key is to *want* to get involved.



Dos & Don'ts of Successful Volunteering

- Do be flexible. It is rare to find the "perfect" fit right away. Keep an open mind—you might discover something new that interests you.
- Do be persistent. Volunteer coordinators are often busy, so don't assume they're not interested in you if they don't call you right away.
- Do attend orientation meetings. Keep in mind that informed volunteers are the best volunteers. These meetings will help you do the best job possible.
- Do take necessary training classes. Ask about them before you decide to get involved and be prepared to learn what will be needed.
- Do be responsible. Show up on time and follow through with your commitments. People will be depending on you.
- Don't expect to start at the top. You have to work hard and prove your worth before you are given more responsibility.
- Don't think that volunteering has to be a group effort. You can start your own volunteer program and do it on your own time.
- Do expect to get plenty of personal enjoyment and satisfaction from your volunteer experiences.



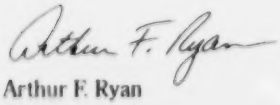
Local Resources for Volunteer Ideas

- Principal, counselor, teacher
- Churches and synagogues
- Organizations such as United Way—and their many affiliates
- Mayor's office
- Civic groups such as the Elks, Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions
- Local arts centers, community theaters
- Food pantries, shelters for the homeless and battered women
- Zoos, animal shelters, conservation groups
- Hospitals, hospices, nursing homes
- Residential facilities for the disabled or abused children
- Newspapers, television and radio
- Schools and libraries
- Local community and volunteer centers

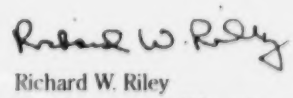
Hopefully, this booklet has given you some ideas for types of volunteer service, and information on where to go to find the organizations in need of young volunteers. There is little doubt that the needs exist, whether in your school, your neighborhood or city, or through your church or synagogue. Match your interests with the many volunteer opportunities available.

If you are still stumped, on the next page is a list of some national service organizations that offer information on youth volunteering. Write or call them for additional ideas.

Ready, set, go—Catch the Spirit of volunteerism!



Arthur F. Ryan
Chairman and
Chief Executive Officer
The Prudential



Richard W. Riley
U.S. Secretary of Education

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National Organizations with Information for Young Volunteers

America's Charities
12701 Fair Lakes Circle, Suite 370, Fairfax, VA 22033
(800) 458-9505

American National Red Cross
Division of Youth Involvement
8111 Gatehouse Road, Falls Church, VA 22042
(703) 206-8344

Boys and Girls Clubs of America
1230 West Peachtree Street, N.W., Atlanta, GA 30309
(404) 815-5700

Child Welfare League of America
440 First Street, N.W., Suite 310
Washington, DC 20001-2085 (202) 638-2952

Earth Force
1501 Wilson Blvd., 12th Floor, Arlington, VA 22209
(703) 243-7400

Habitat for Humanity International
121 Habitat Street, Americus, GA 31709
(912) 924-6935

National Crime Prevention Council
Municipal & Youth Initiative Unit, 1700 K Street, N.W.
Second Floor, Washington, DC 20006 (202) 466-6272

National 4-H Council
7100 Connecticut Ave., Chevy Chase, MD 20815
(301) 961-2916

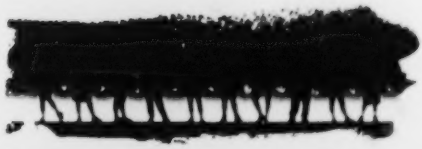
Points of Light Foundation
1737 H Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20006
(202) 223-9186

Quest International
Lions/Quest Skills for Action, 1984 Coffman Road
Newark, Ohio 43058 (800) 446-2700

YMCA of the USA
101 North Wacker Drive, Chicago, IL 60606
(312) 977-0031

Youth Volunteer Corps of America
6310 Lamar Ave., Suite 125, Overland Park, KS 66202-4247
(913) 432-YVCA

The U.S. Secretary of Education, Richard Riley, invites you to join with more than 200 member organizations of the Family Involvement Partnership for Learning who support better learning for children through programs like *Read•Write•Now!*, encouraging teens and adults to spend 30 minutes a day reading and writing with a younger child, and the *One-on-One* mentoring program which supports families and children through mentoring and tutoring. For information call 1-800-USA-LEARN.



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- A national awards competition to honor outstanding examples of community service by secondary-school students, conducted in partnership with the National Association of Secondary School Principals.
- A community youth leadership training program developed and implemented in conjunction with the Center for Creative Leadership and Youth Service America.
- A series of regional conferences on youth volunteerism organized by Columbia Institute.
- A high school journalism awards program administered by Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism.

For information, write to:
The Prudential Spirit of Community Initiative
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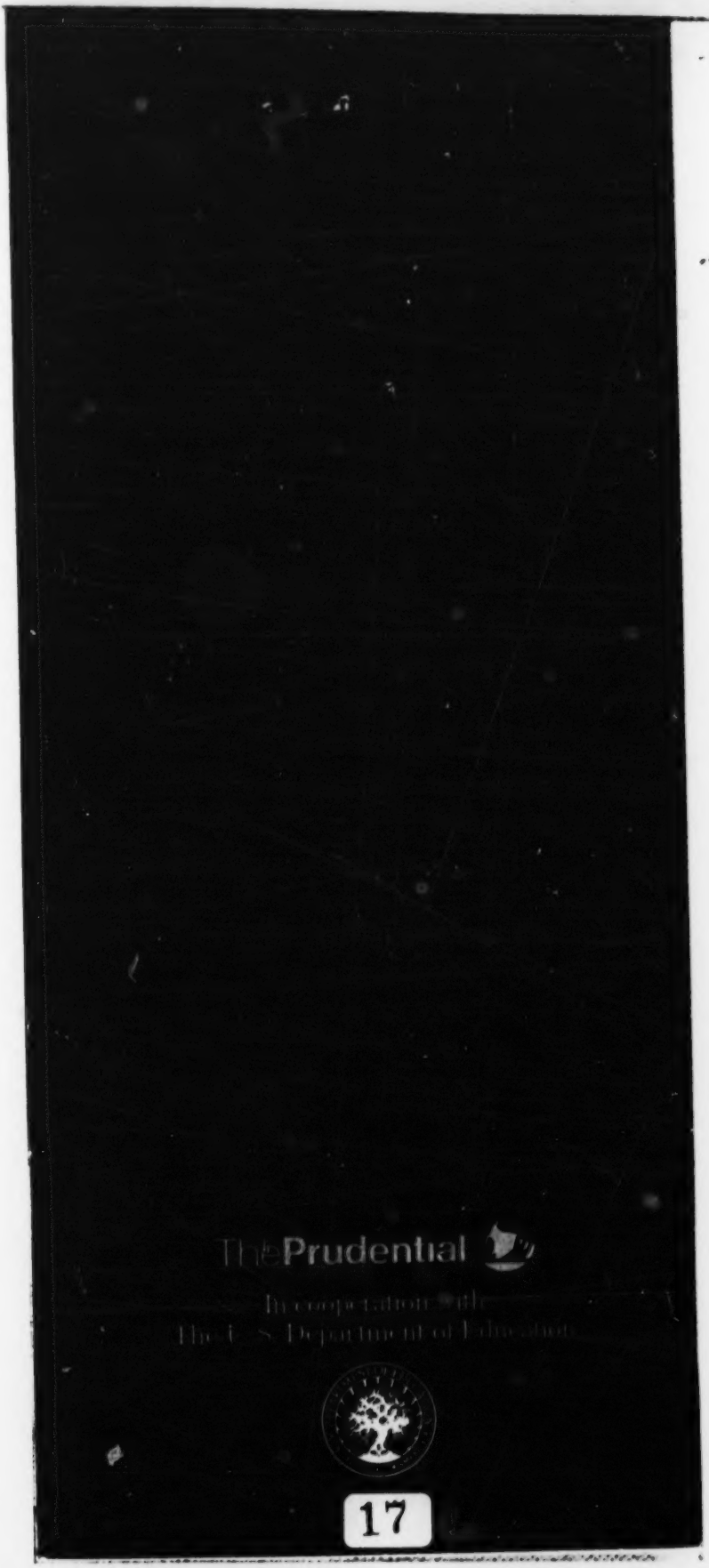
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